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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8546
INFO RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 2326
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 2185
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 3205
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE 1525
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 4047
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 3752

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001501

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STATE FOR DS/CC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: THREE PRISONS BACK UNDER CONTROL AFTER RIOTS

REF: A. AMMAN 1176

- [1](#)B. 05 AMMAN 9940
- [1](#)C. 05 AMMAN 9733
- [1](#)D. 05 AMMAN 9515

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DAVID HALE FOR REASONS 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Authorities have regained control of three prisons after overnight riots. Islamist extremists at the prisons appear to have been at the center of the disturbances. According to local security contacts, members of parliament from the Islamic Action Front took part in successful negotiations to end the standoffs. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Public Security Directorate (PSD) contacts confirmed to RSO Reuters reports that Jordanian authorities had regained control by 1400 local time March 1 at the three prisons that erupted in rioting overnight, and that eight officials taken hostage had been freed.

[1](#)3. (U) The disturbances took place at prisons at Jweida in East Amman, Swaga, 50 miles south of Amman, and Qafqafa, 40 miles north of Amman.

[1](#)4. (C) A contact in Jordan's Public Security Directorate (PSD) told RSO that eight police hostages were seized and eventually released at Jweida. Among those held were Colonel Sa'd al-Ajrami, director of Jordan's prison service, and Shakir al-Ajrami, warden of Jweida prison. Prisoners beat most of the hostages, and several were hospitalized after their release. According to PSD, Islamic Action Front parliamentarians brokered the deal with the Jweida inmates, and promised to bring about improvements in prison conditions in return for their surrender.

[1](#)5. (U) Al Jazeera reported that the clashes between the security forces and Islamist prisoners began at Swaga prison when authorities attempted to transfer Yasir Furayhat and Salim Suwayd, the two inmates sentenced to death in the 2002 assassination of USAID officer Lawrence Foley. Al Jazeera broadcast what they claimed to be a phone conversation with Suwayd. In it, Suwayd said that the authorities had come in order to carry out the death warrants against "the brothers". Suwayd claimed the security forces used tear gas against the prisoners.

[1](#)6. (U) Reuters reported that among the Jweida prisoners' demands was the release of Sajida al Rishawi, the Iraqi woman captured after she failed to detonate her suicide bomb vest during the November 9th hotel bombings in Amman. Another

high-profile detainee at Jweida is Azmi Jayousi, a Jordanian aide of Abu Musab al Zargawi. Jayousi was sentenced to death in February 2006 for his role in plotting a foiled 2004 attack in Jordan (ref A).

17. (C) PSD contacts, in a preliminary assessment, believe prison authorities had been lax in enforcing a ban on cellular phones, and that this had led to the near-simultaneous uprisings.

HALE